

# **EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

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## **REMARKS BY U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT WORKING SESSION # 1: ERADICATING POVERTY AND HUNGER**

**DHAKA  
AUGUST 5, 2012**

The Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her initiative in making this conference possible

The Honorable Food and Disaster Management Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque

The Honorable Mr. Jan Kamiel Frank Grauls, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Belgium to the UN, NY

Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai (Nepal)

PKSF Chairman Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad

Director General Saida Muna Tasneem (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Asalamu Alaikum and good morning!

I know neither poverty nor hunger.

I have not lived either.

My background on a small Iowa farm was modest, but I was never poor and never experienced the gnawing pain of deep hunger as the body seeks to consume itself.

However, I lived years in the midst of wretched poverty and hunger.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in the heart of Africa, I lived among villages where most children manifested kwashiorkor – protein deficiency – African children with bright red hair, blotchy skin, and extended bellies. It was a gruesomely ugly sight.

But hunger and poverty can manifest themselves in other ways ... ways less obvious.

I call this stealth poverty and hunger.

Bangladesh has a manifestation of this stealth poverty and hunger ... it is called stunting.

Stunting is difficult to see. A child may look like a normally maturing child of three, until you learn that he or she is six years old. Stunting is a most destructive force as it diminishes both a child's physical growth and his or her mental development. The 2011 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey estimates that over 40% of Bangladesh's children are stunted.

Stunting is most insidious ... I hate stunting ... and I long for the day that not one child in Bangladesh is a victim of stunting.

That day need not be far off. Forty-one years ago Bangladesh embarked on a revolution – the War of Liberation – and today Bangladesh has launched another revolution, an agricultural revolution, and a revolution that is already paying great dividends. Imagine ... imagine ... Bangladesh, the world's seventh most populous country and the world's most densely populated country aside from some small island or city-state countries, becoming food self-sufficient. I believe this could be reality by the decade's end.

This is truly a revolution, and I am proud that America is a full partner with Bangladesh as it strives for food self-sufficiency.

Recognizing the critical importance that the world be able to feed its growing population, which may reach 9 billion during my lifetime n'shallah, President Obama launched a new initiative – Feed the Future – to help key countries meet the food demands of their growing populations. Bangladesh is a Feed the Future focus country, and America last year provided more than \$40 million to support this program here.

Since October 2010, America and Bangladesh have forged a strong partnership to implement Feed the Future. The program has three legs: increasing the availability of food by expanding agricultural production, increasing access to food by improving people's livelihoods and ability to buy needed food, and improving food nutrition so mothers know how to procure and prepare nutritious food for their families.

During the 18 months through March 31, 2012, the partnership had already scored impressive triumphs: the 2.3 million farmers who had applied new technologies or management practices in the program had already increased the value of their rice, fish & shrimp, and horticulture production by over \$220 million; the private sector has made investments of nearly

\$4 million; and farmers are using fertilizer deep placement techniques on over 575,000 hectares of cropland.

This fertilizer deep placement technology is hard to believe: it cuts fertilizer use by 20%, increases rice production by 15-20% and reduces the release of methane into the atmosphere ... truly a win-win-win.

I'm sorry to hit you with so many numbers, but I hope these numbers, which now are bigger than they were in March, will blow you away. They certainly give you some appreciation of Bangladesh's ongoing agricultural revolution and why I am so optimistic about Bangladesh's future. Of course, this is only one of many facets of Bangladesh's fight against poverty and hunger. Bangladesh is pushing ahead on many other fronts: education, health, economic growth and democracy, to name but a few. In all these areas, America is Bangladesh's proud partner as it breaks loose of poverty and hunger.

I believe that the Bangladesh experience is a good model for others. Bangladesh's approach is comprehensive, founded on the bedrock of improving education, health, agriculture and nutrition as a foundation for winning the struggle against poverty and hunger.

But Bangladesh need not content itself with only reducing poverty and hunger; it could and should go much further. Bangladesh truly should be the next Asian Tiger, the Royal Bengal Tiger, a middle income country whose citizens have good livelihoods, safe housing, ample, nutritious food, and access to quality education and health care. This Bangladesh, the Golden Bangladesh, would be the largest exporter of readymade garments and household textiles in the world ... and a huge global player in ship building, pharmaceutical production, IT, footwear, frozen fish and shrimp, jute, silk and the list goes on.

This Bangladesh, the Golden Bangladesh, would have won the war against poverty and hunger. This is no dreamy vision; this could be reality in the next decade or two.

Thank you.

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